

**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN HENRY CUELLAR**  
**Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism**  
**Committee on Homeland Security**

**“Enhancing DHS’ Efforts to Disrupt Alien Smuggling Across Our Borders”**

July 22, 2010

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Today, the Subcommittee is examining a growing homeland security challenge: alien smuggling across America’s borders. In recent years, those of us living near our Nation’s Southern Border have witnessed a troubling uptick in alien smuggling activities. Not unique to the South, human smuggling also occurs along our Northern Border too. As a result, the federal government has sent more personnel and resources to secure our borders.

And in response, individuals seeking to enter the U.S. illegally have become increasingly dependent on alien smugglers to help them evade our law enforcement and gain entry into this country. As we’ve done more to secure our borders, alien smuggling organizations have increasingly become more bold, violent and dangerous.

They are posing new threats to our law enforcement officials, our border communities and the people they attempt to smuggle across our borders. Particularly troubling is the potential for these organizations to smuggle terrorists into our country.

While the vast majority of individuals being smuggled into the U.S. are economic migrants, the possibility exists that those who would seek to do us harm might exploit these routes with dire consequences for our nation’s security. Therefore we are working to secure not just our land borders, but our maritime ports of entry and coastal waters as well. But tightening up security on their smuggling routes is just one part of the bigger solution.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and their federal, state, and local partners have stepped up efforts to identify and disrupt alien smuggling organizations in recent years.

Just this week, Secretary Napolitano announced that DHS is deploying 100 additional ICE personnel, 300 more Border Patrol agents and CBP officers, and new technology and aircraft to Arizona, which is a major area for alien smuggling.

DHS is also initiating a program in Arizona to increase the prosecution of criminal aliens apprehended for re-entering the United States illegally after prior removal. These kinds of prosecution efforts have been successful elsewhere along the border, and I am encouraged by their use in Arizona as well.

The Obama Administration also announced it will temporarily deploy 1,200 National Guard troops to the southern border beginning August 1, 2010. This deployment will provide additional support and surveillance to our border security efforts already underway. In doing so, it will strengthen our multi-layered approach to combat narcotics, weapons, bulk cash, and human smuggling along our border. These measures are encouraging, but much more remains to be done.

As the Government Accountability Office found in the report being released in conjunction with today’s hearing, DHS should better leverage its personnel and resources. We know ICE personnel in particular are increasingly stretched thin, which is an issue DHS and Congress need to address. GAO also recommends that ICE consider using additional financial investigative and seizure techniques to combat alien smuggling.

In the Texas Legislature, we worked to shut down casas de cambio, which are money exchange businesses, who were found to be involved in laundering illicit proceeds, so I understand that to fight criminal organizations, often the best way is to go after their money.

Finally, I would like to thank Chairman Thompson and Rep. Harry Mitchell for requesting this important GAO report. Rep. Mitchell recently introduced legislation to give ICE additional asset forfeiture authority, and I applaud his leadership on this important issue.